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Letter dated 2 June 2009 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 13 May 2009, which I received from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Ban** Ki-moon

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Please recycle

Annex

Letter dated 13 May 2009 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 1510 (2003), I attach a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force covering the period from August 2008 to January 2009. I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jaap **de Hoop Scheffer**

Enclosure

Quarterly report to the Security Council on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force

Introduction

1. The present report, pursuant to the obligation under Security Council resolution 1386 (2001) to report to the United Nations on the progress of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission, covers the period from 1 August 2008 to 31 January 2009. As at 2 February 2009, total ISAF strength stood at 57,249 personnel from 26 NATO nations and 15 non-NATO nations.

2. Throughout the reporting period, ISAF continued to assist the Government of Afghanistan in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. From 1 August 2008 to 31 January 2009, ISAF suffered 777 casualties in total: 113 killed in action and 664 wounded in action. Key issues have been:

(a) ISAF continued to conduct security and stabilization operations while supporting governance, reconstruction and development. Security operations have been conducted with an emphasis on ensuring freedom of movement, particularly along the ring road, building the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces and assisting the Government with voter registration. In addition, the ISAF security footprint in Kabul has been reduced, while maintaining support to the Security Forces. Combined operations with the Security Forces have included the movement of critical electricity-generation equipment to the Kajaki dam, although as is the case with many infrastructure projects, delivery of the full benefit to the Afghan people will take many years;

(b) Every effort has been made to avoid civilian casualties and collateral damage. Procedures and processes are continually reviewed, and ISAF has implemented a new process to facilitate joint ISAF-Afghan investigations and hold joint press conferences in conjunction with the newly established Government Media and Information Centre as soon as information is available, in order to promote transparency;

(c) The focus of ISAF in the coming months will be to continue to support the efforts of the Afghan National Security Forces to provide security to the electoral process, including through the deployment of the Election Support Force for the election period. Additionally, ISAF will endeavour to increase cooperation, mentoring, planning and the combined execution of security operations with the Security Forces across the theatre. ISAF intends to maintain a high operational tempo throughout the winter months.

Security situation

3. Insurgent activity throughout Afghanistan was somewhat higher than in the same period last year. The unusually mild winter weather allowed opposing militant forces to remain active for longer than in previous winters rather than return to sanctuaries and their homes. The insurgents have avoided larger-scale direct engagements and tended to focus on improvised explosive device attacks and smaller-scale attacks against soft targets, such as Government officials and the Afghan National Police/Afghan National Security Forces. Insurgents have come under pressure in areas where they have not been challenged in the past, thus

forcing them to focus great effort on protecting their lines of communication and preserving their freedom of movement. The insurgents have also increased negative propaganda and shown greater indifference to civilian casualties during their operations. These factors — combined with the overall year-end statistics showing significant increases in casualties in 2008 — have created the perception that neither the Government of Afghanistan nor ISAF is able to provide adequate security to the Afghan people. Regional security situations are as follows:

(a) *Regional Command Capital*: The opposing militant forces sought to maintain the perception of a negative security situation in and around Kabul City by conducting several direct fire and improvised explosive device attacks. Several incidents occurred in this reporting period, the most significant being the ambush on an ISAF patrol in Surobi District. Other significant events include the assassination of Judge Alim Hanif, Chief Judge of the Central Narcotics Tribunal Appeals Court; the assassination of the Governor of Lowgar in Paghman District; and the 30 October 2008 suicide improvised explosive device attack against the Ministry of Information and Culture. Propaganda was employed to exploit those incidents. Despite those high-profile events, the Afghan National Security Forces has successfully assumed lead responsibility for many of the security tasks in Kabul previously conducted by ISAF. Despite the continuous threat of improvised explosive device attacks against high-profile/high-payoff targets, the overall security situation in Regional Command Capital has improved. However, the threat and a small number of isolated, high-profile incidents have created the perception that the insurgents maintain a strong influence surrounding the city of Kabul. ISAF assesses that the insurgents remain unable to gain the freedom of movement and operating areas required to "encircle" Kabul;

(b) *Regional Command North*: Insurgent violence remains mostly connected to the activities of criminal and illegal armed groups. The insurgents have attempted to spread violence outside the Pashtun areas, but have had limited success. Competing interests from regional power brokers and ethnic divisions continue to play a major role in limiting the spread of the insurgents' influence;

(c) *Regional Command West*: Insurgent activity in Regional Command West was focused on Farah and Badghis provinces. In Badghis province, Government influence and presence is limited, as local elders, opportunistic power brokers and criminals try to ensure that their interests prevail; the situation has worsened significantly since the release of Mullah Dastigir.[a] Farah remained a critical location for the insurgents, as it is an important insurgent junction linking safe havens to lines of communication;

(d) *Regional Command South*: The insurgency in Regional Command South remains the focal point for the Taliban, whose efforts are greatest in Helmand. This area is the traditional homeland of the Pashtun-dominated Taliban movement in Afghanistan. Across the region, improvised explosive device attacks continue to increase. The insurgents are also believed to be relying even more heavily on the narcotics industry for money, especially in the winter months;

(e) *Regional Command East*: Overall, continuing insurgent activity and weak governance in many Regional Command East provinces have limited the effect of ongoing ISAF military and reconstruction activities in the region. Activity

[a] Update: Mullah Dastigir was successfully targeted by coalition forces on 15 February 2009.

of opposing militant forces was high along the Afghan/Pakistan border. The opposing militant forces routinely transit the porous border to conduct hit-and-run attacks against ISAF, the coalition forces and the Afghan National Security Forces before retreating to illegal sanctuaries in Pakistan. Additionally, opposing militant forces' efforts to intimidate and target Government officials have increased, resulting in the death of Lowgar Governor Hazrat Din Nur. The extremely difficult terrain along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border and the limited number of ISAF combat troops to deny infiltrations into Afghanistan make it extremely difficult to limit insurgent activity in Regional Command East.

Afghan National Army

4. The Afghan National Army continues to make steady progress, increasing in capacity and capability while simultaneously conducting security and stabilization operations. Confirmation of this lies in greater leadership in the conduct of operations. However, development of the Afghan Ministry of Defence and the Afghan National Army Air Corps remains far behind that of the army combat forces, and an overall lack of training teams continues to hamper the speed of the Afghan National Army's development. While recent contributions of training teams by allies at the Summit is welcome, the continued expansion of the army will require more teams. Progress is summarized as follows:

(a) *Capability*: More than half of Afghan National Army units are currently partnering with ISAF and coalition forces during the conduct of security and stabilization operations. Thirty-three per cent of army units are capable of conducting security and stabilization operations at the battalion level with limited external support, although many such units continue to require active mentoring. Despite the upward trend, more must be done before the army can reach a level where it can operate independently and overcome the logistic challenges posed to it. Emphasis on development of the Ministry of Defence and the Afghan National Army Air Corps, outfitting forces with appropriate enablers and the establishment of a sustainable logistics support system are critical if the army is to be able to conduct independent operations;

(b) *Manning*: Manning numbers continue to climb, with approximately 79,000 personnel assigned as of January 2009, thus nearly achieving the former goal of 80,000. With the current manning, historical trends and projected fill rates, it is anticipated that the Afghan National Army will meet its desired manning end state of 134,000 in accordance with established timelines;

(c) *Equipment*: The United States of America continues to provide the bulk of equipment and financial support to the Afghan National Army, with other NATO nations providing substantive support. Although equipment donations remain insufficient, there has been progress in the nations' monetary donations to the NATO trust fund over the reporting period. Eight nations have contributed to the trust fund, and these donations have already supported the procurement of winter equipment and the transportation of previously donated items. The NATO equipment trust fund covers all key categories of the donation programme, that is, transportation costs, procurement of equipment, training, infrastructure and sustainment. With the United States continuing to equip the army and nations' improved support to the NATO trust fund, it is projected that the army will meet its equipment fielding requirements in accordance with the established plan;

(d) *Training*: NATO operational mentoring and liaison teams and United States embedded training teams are proving invaluable to supporting the development of the army. However, the increasing requirement for additional teams persists. This situation significantly undermines the development of the army and, indirectly, the Afghan National Police. Currently, approximately 80 per cent of the required teams have been fielded, an increased percentage from the previous reporting period. However, with the continued increase in the number of army units and insufficient offers of operational mentoring liaison teams to meet this expansion, it is projected that the shortfall of teams will increase by December 2009. In addition to the requirement for deployment of teams, the hesitancy of nations to actively support Afghan National Army branch schools is likely to impede the development of the army. These schools play a vital role in the long-term development of the army;

(e) *Afghan National Army Air Corps*: Over the past year, almost entirely financed by the United States, the Afghan National Army Air Corps has expanded its training and its contribution to army operations throughout Afghanistan. At present, there are approximately 2,300 personnel in the Air Corps, and that number is growing. Despite minimal involvement by NATO and ISAF, Afghan National Army Air Corps training is progressing. With the proper support, the Air Corps will soon become the leading enabler for the entire Afghan National Army; however, for the Air Corps to achieve the self-sufficiency and mission capability required to support the growing ranks of the army within the available time, it will depend heavily on international coalition and NATO help. NATO support for the Air Corps consists mainly of equipment donations to the Government of Afghanistan. NATO is staffing a Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan request for pilot and maintenance instructors. This increased support will be vital to the continued development of the Air Corps.

Afghan National Police

5. While supporting the Afghan National Police is not under the direct responsibility of ISAF, the inability to develop the Afghan National Police as quickly as the Afghan National Army remains one of the most significant problems in establishing security and the rule of law in Afghanistan. Although there are a number of initiatives to improve police development, the Afghan National Police remains far behind the Afghan National Army. The focused district development, capital jumpstart and focused border development programmes are promising initiatives helping to build the capacity of the police. With approximately 79,000 personnel assigned, the Afghan National Police has nearly achieved its goal of an 82,000-man force; however, the number of adequately trained personnel remains low, and problems of absenteeism and corruption persist. Therefore, unless substantive support is provided in the near term by the international coalition in the form of police mentors and equipment support, the Afghan National Police will continue to fall further behind in their development, increasing the amount of time required to develop an effective force. The key programmes are progressing as follows:

(a) The focused district development programme, executed by the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, has started in 52 selected districts and is a focal point of the international coalition engagement for Afghan National Police development. Germany started in January 2009 to conduct focused district

development in Regional Command North. As the programme contributes positively to the security of the selected districts, the Afghan Ministry of the Interior has approved the continuation and expansion of the programme into additional districts starting in January 2009. Confidence in the trained Afghanistan National Civil Order Police is increasing and could improve Afghan perceptions of their police institutions. The persistent shortage of police mentor teams assigned to the focused district development programme will prolong the programme if not addressed by the nations;

(b) The European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan increasingly contributes to the development of the Afghan National Police, including in the fields of anti-corruption, criminal investigation, the rule of law and training. The EU decision to double the size of the mission, currently being implemented, has given renewed impetus to the mission;

(c) Focused border development has commenced and is aimed at retraining the Afghan Border Police in an effort to stem the tide of insurgents entering districts bordering Pakistan. Over the reporting period, some 1,200 Border Police went through the focused border development programme and another 5,000 are expected to do so by September 2009. Equipping the Afghan Border Police remains a critical shortfall.

Counter-narcotics

6. ISAF operations have continued to focus on cross-agency coordination and on seeking to disrupt the narcotics industry though support to the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. ISAF provincial reconstruction teams have continued to work towards providing guidance to provincial planners, which has contributed to the promotion of alternative-livelihood programmes and has been reinforced by ISAF information operations. It is recognized that the illicit narcotics industry continues to be a factor in funding of the insurgency. Evidence exists that money linked to narcotics production and trafficking is being used to directly finance some insurgent operations. ISAF has continued to provide logistical and intelligence support to Afghan forces, operating within the current counter-narcotic mandate and resources. In accordance with the Budapest Defence Ministers meeting of 10 October 2008, ISAF has sought to enhance its support to the Afghan forces and target the nexus between the insurgency and the illegal narcotics industry. Narcotics production continues to contribute to instability and corruption, directly threatening all levels of governance, including police authority and the wider rule of law. ISAF support for the Government's key counter-narcotic interdiction forces is aimed at delivering an effect that actively discourages narcotic production and trafficking, without directly engaging in operations against cultivation or farmers. Within the current mandate and in accordance with international law and the ISAF rules of engagement, the actions taken will be in accordance with the NATO policy to avoid civilian casualties to the maximum extent possible.

Governance

7. Although there have been some encouraging initiatives, overall progress in establishing effective national and subnational institutions in Afghanistan remains slow. The Government's limited reach and lack of capability to deliver security, economic and social services evenly across the country, coupled with widespread

corruption, impede efforts to stem the insurgency. These problems, combined with a severe shortage of professional, trained personnel, limit the ability of the Government to deliver visible progress. Warlords, criminals (particularly narco-criminals) and senior tribal figures continue to undermine central and provincial government authority for their own ends, while all levels and institutions of Government continue to struggle against corruption (including the police and the judiciary). The development of effective, professional and sustainable Government institutions at the subnational level is urgently required to gain popular support for the Government; however, achieving reform will be slow. Most of the ministries remain ineffective, under-resourced and lacking in skilled or experienced personnel, and this lack of institutional capacity makes it difficult for ministries to administer and disburse development funds. While surveys indicate a broad degree of popular support for President Karzai, the slow progress in improving governance carries a real danger that the Afghan population increasingly will turn to alternative local and regional mechanisms of governance.

8. Increasing domestic revenues remains a major challenge for the Government of Afghanistan. Central revenue collection is complicated by the political and tribal landscape, the security situation, widespread corruption and by the difficulty in imposing an effective tax regime on the large informal and rural economy of Afghanistan. Major improvements to the police and judicial system and to the tax and customs regime are required if Afghanistan is to be able to fund a substantial portion of the operating budget from domestic revenues in the near future. Given the current global economic downturn and the recent critical International Monetary Fund report on the country's financial health, it is certain that Afghanistan will remain reliant on the international community for the foreseeable future.

9. There are also some encouraging signs. In October 2008 the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board approved the Independent Directorate for Local Governance-initiated Afghan social outreach programme. This is the most significant Afghan initiative on subnational governance and will remain at the centre of attempts to improve the situation until the District Council elections planned for September 10. The programme is a local governance programme that will function through district shuras and community councils, whose members will be appointed through local consultation. It is an attempt to revitalize traditional collective decision-making processes whereby the community has a say in matters affecting it. The programme does have a security dimension, as it is intended to strengthen community security by enhancing the cohesion of that community, making it less vulnerable to extremist infiltration and intimidation. It has been specifically stated that councils will not arm community members or manage armed groups. A pilot programme has been run in Wardak Province for the past year, and initially negative reports have started to improve (community councils formed and projects being implemented). A new programme is due to start in Helmand province shortly.

Development

10. Over the reporting period, we have seen slow but steady progress in a number of development sectors. Access to food has increased thanks to lower food prices and improvements in the coordination of humanitarian aid. Considerable success has been achieved in the close cooperation between ISAF and the World Food Programme (WFP). The Government, ISAF and WFP successfully prepositioned food items for the winter season. Efforts to transport and distribute food are still

ongoing, and there is no indication of an immediate Afghanistan-wide food shortage. However, more donations from the international community are needed to avoid food shortages during the spring and summer of 2009. Low precipitation, high prices and a lack of access to improved seed and fertilizers have limited agricultural development. To transform the agricultural sector, investments from the private community will be required, but this is hampered by issues such as property rights, insufficient rule of law, continued corruption and insufficient access to energy resources.

11. Other basic human services have seen varying progress during the reporting period. Overall health care experienced some progress; however, urban health care remains better than rural. Education is also steadily improving, yet still suffers from the lack of security. Water resource management remains poor and requires much greater inter-ministerial and donor coordination to solve the issues. Electricity production has been making some progress, but overall production was down owing to the impact of the drought. Lack of Afghan capacity, insufficient investment and self-sustainability and security concerns hamper road construction and maintenance. On the positive side, 10 per cent of the ring road was completed in the last quarter. The main structures to monitor and coordinate development in relation to the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, together with the underlying committees and working groups, are off to a good start, but a lot of work still needs to be done in order to make them fully functional.